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The Versatility of the Cello: From Bach to Barber

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The Versatility of The Cello:
from Bach to Barber

Senior Project submitted to
The Division of the Arts
of Bard College

by

Nicholas Wetherell

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2015

Division of the Arts, Major in Cello Performance.

Artist Statement:

For my first senior concert in December of last year I performed the first three Bach Solo Cello Suites in the Chapel of the Holy Innocents. I had the idea for the program after I played in a composer's senior concert in the Chapel the spring of my junior year. In that concert I played an improvised duet with the composer, for cello and Serge modular synthesizer. It was an incredible experience to rehearse and perform closely with an electronic instrument that is played with dials and patch cables, especially since my own instrument, the cello, depends on much older technology for its production of sound. The composer had monitors set up in four corners of the Chapel, and the sound of my cello and the synthesizer seemed to rise in the middle of the grand space and settle upon every inch of the woodwork. After that concert I knew I wanted to take advantage of the acoustics in the Chapel and give my own performance there.

Preparing the first three Bach suites for performance was incredibly challenging and rewarding. It was a pleasure and a privilege to learn the suites with my teacher, Luis Garcia-Renart, who shares the same excited energy for musical exploration that I do. He provided me with his music that contained his bowings and fingerings for the suites and told me to think of it as a "Michelin road guide" for the suites. That is, the markings in the part were recommendations, but not necessities. With him, I learned the music and we intensely discussed different interpretations of movements, and of the structure of the suites as a whole. We tried many different things. Some worked, and some did not, but I learned the most from experimenting with different ideas. I spent over a year learning the suites with Luis. I believe the end result of all our work together, all of our discussion, and trial and error, was that I had internalized my own road map for the suites. I knew all the major points of arrival along the

road, and this general knowledge allowed me the freedom of interpretation, the freedom to explore: to pull over somewhere off the map and look around for a little while. In the weeks leading up to my performance, I was doing different bowings and fingerings every time I practiced. Thus, even though I had music in front of me, I was essentially improvising. I tried to make every performance different. So on the day of my own concert in the chapel, I did not know exactly what I would play in any given movement. All I knew was that whatever I played would be my own.

Although preparing and performing a solo recital was rewarding, for my second concert I wanted to feature some of the amazing musicians I have had the privilege to work with in my time at Bard. My second senior concert, which will be on Sunday, May 17th in Bard Hall, will highlight chamber music and collaboration. I will perform the Sonata for Cello and Piano in C minor by Samuel Barber, Op. 6, with Erika Allen. I will also perform the Piano Trio No. 2 in E minor by Dmitri Shostakovich, Op. 67, with Matthew Woodard and Jesse Goldberg. And I will perform a Duet for Voice and Cello by Bard student, Raina Sokolov-Gonzalez, with Nelle Anderson. I originally played the duet for Joan Tower's composition class this semester. I wanted to include a piece by a Bard student on my senior concert because working closely with Bard composers has been a big part of my experience at Bard. Since I have been a student, every semester I have performed the pieces of student composers from the composition workshop. It has been a rewarding experience to be able to work with students from the class and teach them about my instrument in their compositional process. And I have learned a lot about myself, as a performer, by working with and talking to composers. I am grateful to all the musicians who I have had the opportunity to work with at Bard, and I am excited to perform with some of them at my final concert.

Nicholas Wetherell

Senior Concert I

Saturday, December 6th, 2014

Chapel of the Holy Innocents, Bard College



VIOLONCELLO.
Length, 3 ft. 10 in.
Length of bow, 28 in.

Suite No. 1 in G major

J.S. Bach

- I. Prelude
- II. Allemande
- III. Courante
- IV. Sarabande
- V. Menuet
- VI. Gigue

Suite No. 2 in D minor

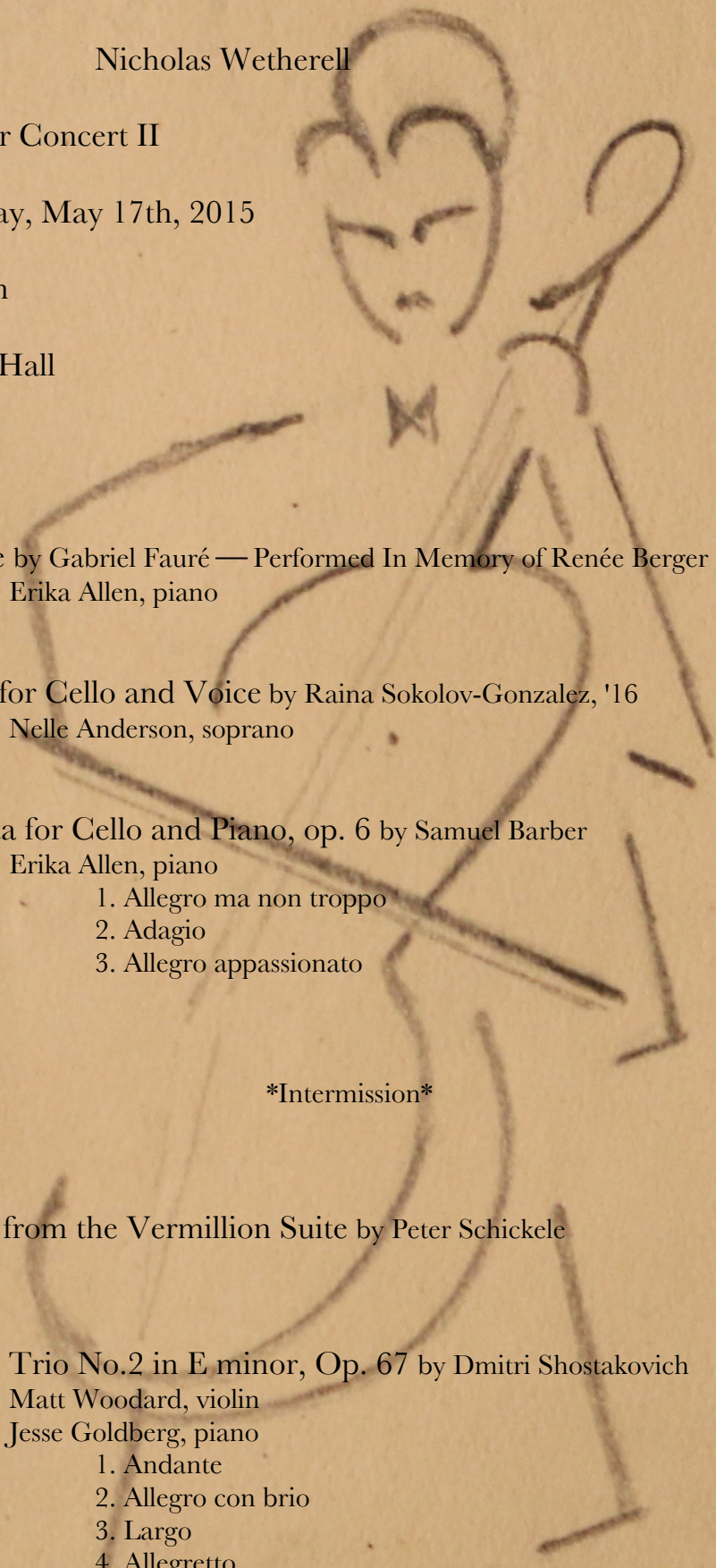
J.S. Bach

- I. Prelude
- II. Allemande
- III. Courante
- IV. Sarabande
- V. Menuet
- VI. Gigue

Suite No. 3 in C major

J.S. Bach

- I. Prelude
- II. Allemande
- III. Courante
- IV. Sarabande
- V. Bourée
- VI. Gigue



Nicholas Wetherell

Senior Concert II

Sunday, May 17th, 2015

12 pm

Bard Hall

Élégie by Gabriel Fauré — Performed In Memory of Renée Berger
Erika Allen, piano

Duet for Cello and Voice by Raina Sokolov-Gonzalez, '16
Nelle Anderson, soprano

Sonata for Cello and Piano, op. 6 by Samuel Barber
Erika Allen, piano
1. Allegro ma non troppo
2. Adagio
3. Allegro appassionato

Intermission

Blues from the Vermillion Suite by Peter Schickele

Piano Trio No.2 in E minor, Op. 67 by Dmitri Shostakovich
Matt Woodard, violin
Jesse Goldberg, piano
1. Andante
2. Allegro con brio
3. Largo
4. Allegretto